



Executive Summary

In January 2025, the Colorado Human Trafficking Council (the Council) held its annual retreat where council members gathered to reflect on the past year and establish their focus for the coming year. Through a process of gallery-style voting, the members added their preferences to various topics up for consideration. The consensus was to continue the Prevention Task Force from 2018 (PTF-2025) and to form a new task force, the Service Provider Partnerships Task Force (SPPTF). In addition, the Council concluded the work of the *Connecting Colorado: Building Effective Anti-Trafficking Systems* project under the *Improving Outcomes for Child and Youth Victims of Human Trafficking* grant funded by Office for Victims of Crime (OVC).

Included in this Executive Summary are the recommendations developed by these task forces as part of the Council's work. These recommendations are not reflective of any recommendations by the Colorado Department of Public Safety.

Data Collection on Human Trafficking in Colorado

To fulfill its legislative mandate to report on the incidence of human trafficking in the state of Colorado, the Council analyzed three years of data collected from a wide array of stakeholders. This 2025 report specifically uses data from calendar years (CY) 2022

through 2024, or for federal data, federal fiscal years (FFY) 2022 through 2024.¹ This comprehensive dataset includes data retrieved from federal, state and local law enforcement as well as from OVC-funded service providers. Additional data was sourced from the Divisions of Child Welfare and Youth Services under the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) and both the National Human Trafficking Hotline and Colorado's Human Trafficking Hotline.

The data over the past three years reveal some interesting points:

- OVC-funded grantees showed significant growth in open cases and fluctuating numbers of new clients across three organizations. Organization 1 showed a surge in open cases in CY 2024, while Organization 2 saw a rapid increase in open cases between CY 2022 and 2023 but experienced a decrease in open cases in CY 2024. Organization 3 reported the most dramatic increase in open cases, nearly tripling from 37 in CY 2022 to 111 in CY 2024. New clients for the same organization nearly doubled over the same two-year period, growing from 28 to 56.
- From CY 2022 to 2024, CDHS tracked the number of referrals received that reference sex or labor trafficking. The data reveal a steady rise in referrals from CY 2022 to 2024, from 405 to 448 to 455.
- When comparing data received from service providers versus that reported from the state's human trafficking hotline, child welfare and judicial systems, service providers reported a higher rate of labor trafficking, while the hotline, child welfare and judicial system reported higher rates of sex trafficking.
- For three straight years, mental health was among the top three risk factors for human trafficking in data reported by the Colorado Divisions of Child Welfare and Youth Services as well as the Colorado Youth Detention Continuum.

¹ A federal fiscal year runs from October 1 through September 30.

Prevention Task Force

The focus of PTF-2025 was to build on the efforts of the Council's 2023 Education Task Force's (ETF) work to implement human trafficking training in schools. The ETF's strategy included two components: conference presentations and direct outreach to superintendents.

- **Conference Presentations:** The PTF-2025 submitted proposals to present introductory human trafficking training at statewide conferences targeting key educational-sector audiences, including superintendents, administrators, counselors and mental health professionals. As of this report's publishing, the Human Trafficking Team (HTT)—designated staff from the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, Office for Victims Program—presented training to the Colorado School Counselors Association and the Colorado Society of School Psychologists, receiving positive feedback in both spaces. The aim of this approach is to inspire attendees to report back to their school districts on the value of the training and request further training for school personnel.
- **Direct Outreach to Superintendents:** The PTF-2025 crafted and disseminated a pitch letter to the leadership of all 200 school districts and boards of cooperative education services statewide. This letter outlined the local realities of trafficking and advocated for introductory training for all staff, with a focus on middle schools, where staff are uniquely positioned for early prevention and intervention.

Direct outreach has yielded promising initial success. As of the report date, eight school districts have responded with a commitment to or future interest in scheduling training delivery. Initial commitments, heavily from rural Colorado, show strong interest, with several districts—including Cherry Creek School District, the fourth largest school district in the state—scheduling training into early 2026. The task force is leveraging this initial traction to build momentum by encouraging neighboring districts to follow suit.

By advocating across the state via conferences and targeted, direct communication with superintendents, the PTF-2025 has established a strong foundation to expand human trafficking education across Colorado's school systems.

Service Provider Partnerships

In 2019, the Council received a mandate to develop guidance for service providers. The mandate expired in 2019; however, the underlying principle of supporting service providers with promising practices remained a core guiding principle of the Council.

The SPPTF was created to foster stronger, more collaborative partnerships between service provider organizations that are specific to human trafficking and those that are not specific to human trafficking. To achieve this goal, the SPPTF reviewed three existing Council resources designed to facilitate partnerships and enhance service quality: standards and guidance developed from 2016 to 2017, which made recommendations on training and promising practices for community-based victim advocates, mental and behavioral health professionals and housing program providers; the training course *Meeting Human Trafficking Survivor's Needs: An Advanced Workshop for Service Providers* developed in 2019, designed to help service providers network, discover local service gaps and build skills for delivering trauma-responsive and culturally specific care; and the Human Trafficking Vulnerability Assessment tool designed for multidisciplinary teams and statewide human service agencies to assess vulnerabilities for human trafficking in children and youth.

To pinpoint where partnerships are lacking, the SPPTF conducted a systematic review of 204 organizations that received state funding for crime victim services. In 2024, over 75% of organizations reported serving at least one human trafficking victim. The remaining organizations reported serving zero human trafficking victims. The SPPTF suspected some of these organizations were serving victims but not reporting their activities due to various barriers, presenting a critical opportunity to improve partnerships with these organizations.

The SPPTF created and administered a survey targeting these remaining organizations to better understand their service provision norms, referral practices and decision-making in grant reporting. The results of the survey are expected in early 2026 and will provide the Council with data to inform them how to engage in meaningful partnerships with non-specialized providers. The ultimate goal is to strengthen the service provider network to achieve a “no wrong door” model for survivors of human trafficking, ensuring they can access meaningful care, prevent rejection from services and avoid the likelihood of revictimization and further harm.

Training Outcomes

In accordance with legislative mandate C.R.S. § 18-3-505(e), the Council developed and delivered a comprehensive suite of training programs to educate diverse professional sectors and the public about human trafficking.

The Council offers two core trainings designed for different audiences: *An Introduction to Human Trafficking in Colorado* and *Human Trafficking Investigations: An Introductory Course*. Both courses are offered in a variety of formats, including an instructor-led version, which can be delivered in person, virtually or hybrid, and a self-paced, online version that is best suited for individual learners. Additionally, the Council delivers a two-day Train-the-Trainer (TTT) workshop to teach community members statewide to facilitate the Council’s training programs.

The TTT program significantly expanded the Council’s reach with 41 active partner facilitators, including 15 new facilitators for *Introduction to Human Trafficking* and seven for *Human Trafficking Investigations* added in 2025 alone, demonstrating strong volunteer interest and program sustainability.

Over the three-year period of CY 2022–2024, these volunteer facilitators and staff from the HTT trained 3,804 individuals. Training requests increased sharply in 2023, almost doubling the number of individuals trained in 2022—from 912 to 1,592—and remaining high in 2024, with 1,425 individuals trained. The *Introduction to Human Trafficking* course accounted for the largest share of participants each year. In-person training remained the

preferred method of delivery, and use of the online self-paced modules grew significantly in 2024, reaching 525 attendees.

The top five professional sectors trained between 2022 and 2024 in top-down order were (1) local law enforcement, (2) students, (3) probation/corrections officers, (4) mental health providers and (5) local government staff. Local law enforcement and community members primarily preferred in-person training, while state law enforcement almost exclusively used the online, self-paced module.

The Council achieved a major success in the law enforcement sector this year in partnering with the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Curriculum Committee. In July 2025, a new two-hour human trafficking training requirement in its basic curriculum went into effective. This ensures all incoming cadets receive foundational human trafficking training developed in line with the Council's learning objectives from its *Human Trafficking Investigations* course. The HTT anticipates an increase in requests from police academies for support, training and technical assistance to fulfill this new requirement.

For the coming year, the HTT will focus on implementing the Prevention Task Force's strategy of rolling out the *Introduction to Human Trafficking* training to school personnel across Colorado's schools districts, with the goal of expanding to at least 10% of districts in 2026.

Connecting Colorado

The OVC-funded *Connecting Colorado* project was a major initiative led by the HTT. Its goal was to address critical challenges and gaps in how Colorado identifies and responds to human trafficking involving children and youth by strengthening the use and effectiveness of multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) statewide.

The project built on the success of the prior *Innovate Colorado* initiative and was guided by the HTT and two subgrantees—the Colorado State University Social Work Research Center (CSU-SWRC) for evaluation and the Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network for specialized legal services, training and technical assistance—as well as a Survivor Leader Advisory Board (SLAB) of five paid consultants who provided essential lived-experience

expertise and expressed overwhelmingly positive feedback regarding the meaningful, non-tokenistic nature of their involvement.

The project's central achievement was the creation and refinement of two critical resources for MDTs. First, the *MDT Toolkit*, which was developed with heavy input from the MDT Working Group (made up of Council members, members of existing MDTs and subject-matter experts) and SLAB. The toolkit is a trauma-informed, culturally responsive reference guide of sample policies and procedures for developing and maintaining human trafficking-focused MDTs for children and youth who are victims of, or at risk for, human trafficking. Second, the Human Trafficking Vulnerability Assessment (HTVA), which was a heavily revised tool created after a critical analysis and utility study of the state's original High-Risk Victim (HRV) Identification Tool. The HTVA is a revised assessment tool that incorporates updated indicators, including online exploitation, covers both sex and labor trafficking and includes a supplement section for identifying vulnerability with foreign national youth.

The project was executed in three phases, combining initial rollout with continuous feedback and refinement:

- Phase 1 (2022–2023): Develop and launch the project, establishing the MDT Working Group and SLAB's work on creation of the *MDT Toolkit*. CSU-SWRC conducts the utility study of the HRV tool and, based on study results, the MDT Working Group completes its revision of the HRV Tool, which was renamed the HTVA.
- Phase 2 (2024): Launch the *MDT Toolkit* at a statewide MDT Summit for existing MDTs. Beta-test and evaluate the *MDT Toolkit* with existing MDTs and provide training and technical assistance (TTA) to six existing MDTs to collect extensive feedback on the toolkit's practical use by the CSU-SWRC evaluation team.
- Phase 3 (2025): Pilot-test and roll out the improved *MDT Toolkit 2.0* at a summit in February 2025. Provide targeted TTA to three new participating communities to establish or refine their MDTs and conduct monthly TTA sessions on trauma-

responsive care, survivor-centered care and individualized needs such as funding and referrals.

The *Connecting Colorado* project concluded in September 2025, but its materials and influence will continue due to the ongoing availability of its *MDT Toolkit 2.0* and HTVA for communities and service providers statewide. Additionally, the HTVA has become the required screening tool for CDHS's Child Welfare and Division of Youth Services and is being integrated into the state's case management system—Trails—launching in early 2026. The great success of the SLAB model has been requested and shared with other states interested in thoughtfully engaging consultants with lived experience.

The HTT staff are exploring ways to expand the HTVA rollout with the hope of including service providers across Colorado in 2026.

Reflecting on 2025

This past year was a year of growth in training delivery, partnerships and data collection and marked the successful completion of a four-year project to bolster MDTs and support survivors around the state. Overall, the Council is proud of its accomplishments and progression of work to prevent and respond to human trafficking in the state of Colorado.